

## **LEF Institutional Working Groups.**

Summary from discussions at the ISEA2009 Working Groups

### **1: Categories of Institutions:**

The group discussed the range of institutions which impact on the development of a transdisciplinary agenda. A thorough scoping of these institutions would be required to understand the complex ecology needed to support the evolution and nurturing of activities critical to the LEF agenda.

A broad (but not definitive) range of 'institutions' were discussed and include:

- Degree awarding - Private public institutions (FE and HE).
- Cultural Centres, public arts centres and organisations.
- Commercial organisations and departments.

Action: A categorisation of these would need to be clearly identified, articulated and categorised.

### **2: Divisions within and across Institutions:**

The group recognised the different institutional models that support the LEF agenda. The fact that many initiatives emerge through interactions:

- between departments within institutions;
- through multicampus activities (both horizontally and vertically through progression)
- between individuals/departments across institutions
- cross institutional initiatives
- around regional and cross boarder activities (collaborative learning, group collaboration within projects and across borders (Australia and China))

Pertinent to these infrastructural issues is the hierarchical location of the activity within an institution, ie within the University or within a department of a University.

**Action:** Examples were mentioned in discussions but a range of models will need to be identified

### **3: External Forces.**

It was recognised that the convergence of disciplines, new initiatives and the emergence of the support structures within or across institutions that support the LEF agenda require more than enthusiasm. The forces that drive institutional and departmental missions need to be mapped to better understand the future support of initiatives.

Easily identifiable forces include:

- Governmental research funding agendas (UK RAE/REF, etc), initiatives which actually limit inter/multi/trans disciplinary.
- Research and teaching funding that feeds initiatives defining outputs and ultimately location.

- Why centres are in particular departments.
- Buildings: future planning and past models. Feeding the building, how physical architectures limit the emergence of flexible and dynamic models. Work previously carried out by the Media Centres Mapping Project by Arts Council England under (Bronac Ferren) should be referenced.
- The origins of disciplines that feed the LEF agenda. Many of the models discussed appear to have emerged through initiatives originating in Computing, Architecture or Bioscience. Is there an assumption that Art and Design are the driving forces in institutional change?

**Actions** - Questions need to be asked about:

- As disciplines are firmly rooted vertically in traditional models propagated in School (maths, science, art, etc) where do students interested in the LEF agenda come from?
- Where do the existing disciplinary models come from and how relevant are they to the LEF agenda?
- What interventions could LEF make in the emergence of students through traditional disciplines to alleviate apprehensions (eg software/programming)?
- Whilst practice seems that breaks with traditions seems to be more easily recognised there appears to be a lack of transdisciplinary (probably exemplified in the lack of 'New media arts criticism') - where is it and where does/should it come from?
- How to monitor a global understanding of mechanisms for funding (state funding and commercial/private funding) research and how this influences disciplines and interdisciplinarity?

#### **4: Models:**

A number of models were discussed which explored vertical and horizontal initiatives from School to Postgraduate level and beyond to the professional practitioner. These included:

Belgium: e-culture: masters projects that bring together a range of disciplines.

German Fundamental Studies courses. Taught by specialist lecturers driving interdisciplinarity.

Helsinki: Educational Media centre. In-service training for teachers etc whoever trains across the city. Breaking down of the curriculum to something that describes what should be produced rather than what has to be done. Developing a phenomenon based curriculum rather than disciplinary. Shifting from subjects through the use of inquiry based methods to explore collaborative social constructed knowledge. Developing a training programme to explore new fields (not just art and design) which incorporates e-pedagogy design and visual knowledge building.

Madrid: Collaborative learning, don't see themselves as content providers but the context through which collaboration is facilitated allowing individuals to get involved in different levels within the system.

**Actions:** A range of models need to be identified at all levels of education/research/commerce which might support transdisciplinarity.

#### **4: Futures:**

Institutions need to understand their own futures and the impact of initiatives, technologies and practices which will drive change. Key issues were identified which relate to the future role of institutions, including:

- The nature of knowledge and how to deliver it within these mechanisms and the new structures (institutional and technological).
- Overview of industries involved, in particular telecommunications and network infrastructures which should ( and possibly already are) impacting on accessibility and distribution.
- Timescales: Institutional processes (QAA, etc) and the length of time required to make a difference. timescales.
- Looking at mechanism (such as social networking tools and online learning platforms) to support and enhance inclusion of individuals and communities.
- Building new institutions to help old ones to change? Citizen science as a model for enabling open collaborative infrastructure to support open source knowledge.
- Relationships between commerce and educational institutions.
- The emergence of Online free Masters programmes.
- Open source tools developed within institutions.
- Project based and collaborative learning process.
- International collaborations – already starting with children at the bottom of the educational ladder coming up through the education system.
- European School Net etc, influencing other existing communities. Re-conceptualisation informed by and based on collaboration.
- Changing student profiles. Where are they coming from and what are their motivations aspirations and limitations.
- Individual contribution is currently measured through RAE rather than collaborative. Professional identity and value within and between institutions.
- The role of the interdisciplinary connector? Looking at methodologies across courses and disciplines.
- Role of cultural mediators to bring people together.
- Discontinuity between phases within education. Schools feeding Universities, undergraduates feeding postgraduates and Universities feeding industry.
- The need to track the impact of these technologies on schools, students using technologies (10year impact?). Where are all the aliens Rushcoff promised?
- Output: What kind of job, career profession emerges through these processes?

## **Summary:**

Inderdisciplinarity turning into a discipline!?

Although the discussions veered into territories embraced by the other ISEA2009 LEF workshops it was clear that the nature of our institutions and the changes they are struggling to deal with underpins the future of the LEF agenda. That these interdependencies must be understood: on a global level; within the context of the ecology of economic, social and cultural policy; attempt to rigorously embrace a broad range of disciplines; engage with the inputs and outputs and vertical progression of international education systems. The issues, models, questions and actions highlighted above are tentative steps to frame future discussions.

LEF ISEA2009 working participants:

Facilitators:

I.Clothier@witt.ac.nz

mike.phillips@plymouth.ac.uk

Participants:

s.c.gollifer@bton.ac.uk

Todd\_Winkler@brown.edu

k.mey@ulster.ac.uk (until 20/09/09)

marsha.berry@rmit.edu.au

lester@fullerton.edu

muratgermen@gmail.com

andrea@andreapolli.com

marcos@medialab-prado.es

laura@medialab-prado.es

nele@bamart.be

jukka.orava@gmail.com

pjworrall@googlemail.com

m.oliver@salford.ac.uk